

Dragonshards

Druids of Khorvaire, Part One

By Keith Baker



The *Eberron Campaign Setting* adds a number of options for druids, including mechanical benefits and a nation driven largely by druidic beliefs. However, these options raise additional questions. How far are the sects spread across the land? Do you have to be a member of a sect to be a druid? What happens to your dragonmark when you use wild shape? This three-part article will examine a host of issues tied to the druids of Eberron and take a closer look at druids beyond the Eldeen Reaches, from the blood guardians of the Valenar to the savage druids of the Demon Wastes.

The Role of the Sect

The *Eberron Campaign Setting* presents five druidic sects: the Wardens of the Wood, the Ashbound, the Children of Winter, the Gatekeepers, and the Greensingers. Each sect has unique goals, traditions, and beliefs. The Gatekeepers seek to protect the natural world from unnatural horrors, while the Children of Winter believe that nature will soon scour the world with plague and disaster. Each group has one or more feats that provide a druid with unique abilities associated with the teachings of his sect. You do not have to be a member of a sect to be a druid, and you don't have to take the associated feat to be a member of a sect. Being a member of a sect is a matter of belief and backstory, and as long as you and your Dungeon Master can come to an agreement on your story, you can have a tie to any sect... or none at all. You may believe that Eberron sees through the eyes of all living things, and the thunder is her voice. That Eberron slumbers, and when she wakes she will shatter every city. That civilization is part of Eberron's plan for the world, and just as the rabbit digs a burrow, a human is expected to build a city. Like any cleric, you should have a central pillar for your faith, but like a cleric, you don't have to adhere to one of the major religions.

The *Eberron Campaign Setting* presents feats that are not tied to a specific druid sect: Beast Totem, Beast Shape, and Beast Companion. In addition, a DM can always choose to provide access to an appropriate feat to members of a new sect he has created. For example, the King's Forest of Breland is home to a small band of druids and rangers known as the Shadows of the Forest, which is described in more detail below. While the Shadows have no ties to the Wardens of the Wood, their goals and methods are very similar and the DM may allow a Shadow druid to take the Warden Initiate feat... with a clear understanding between DM and player that this doesn't represent a tie to the Wardens, and that the Wardens will not recognize the druid or her order if she travels to the Reaches. A sect feat represents a particular style of druidic training and should be reserved for members of an organized group. However, that group can certainly have developed in parallel to the Eldeen sects, instead of being part of them.

The Shadows of the Forest

The King's Forest fills southeastern Breland. This rain forest spans hundreds of square miles and provides a home to a wide array of fantastic creatures. However, over the course of centuries, logging and industry have diminished it. The Knight Rangers of Breland patrol the borders and do their best to counter the actions of poachers and brigands, but the forest is vast and the Brelish rangers rarely venture into its depths. The deep forest has other defenders: druids and rangers who slip through the shadows, as stealthy as the displacer beasts that accompany them. These are the Shadows of the Forest.

The Shadows of the Forest act to control the dangerous beasts, doing what they can to keep such

The Druidic Language

All druids have one thing in common: knowledge of the Druidic language, which druids receive as a bonus language upon taking their first level of the class. What does this mean? Why would an Eldeen Greensinger and a Talenta mask-weaver speak the same language, not to mention the hermit who has never encountered another druid? If the Gatekeepers were trained by a dragon, why do they know Druidic instead of Draconic?

Druidic is not a normal language. You don't learn Druidic in the same way that you'd study Sylvan, and even if you know it, you can't teach it to a friend any more than you could teach her to cast *detect snares and pits*. As you master your first level of druid, you learn many magical mysteries. You learn how to speak with animals, how to calm them, and how to hide from them. You unlock the secrets of fire. You learn to mend flesh with a touch, and how to ask the plants to entangle and trap your enemies. These are just a few of your secrets, and the Druidic tongue is another. Many druids believe that it is the first language -- the primal language of Eberron herself. Some claim to have found Druidic inscriptions carved in the sides of mountains or written in the drifting clouds; the DM will have to decide if these tales are truth or fancy.

Since only druids can learn Druidic, speaking this language is a way to identify yourself to other druids you may encounter. If you're about to be boiled alive by kobolds, an appeal to the kobold druid spoken in Druidic could save your life. However, not all druids are allies. A peaceful hermit may despise the violent actions of the Ashbound or the doom-driven work of the Children of Winter. Speaking in Druidic will establish a basic bond, but if you just killed the opposing druid's totem companion, it's not going to get you off the hook.

Next: A further look at issues facing the druids of Eberron!

monsters from venturing near the fringes of the forest and the trade roads. But the Shadows have also fought loggers and laid snares for legitimate hunters, including the royal party of the King's Hunt. Many of the Knight Rangers are grateful for the aid of the Shadows, but by the laws of the land, these druids are trespassers and poachers: A knight is duty-bound to bring Shadows to justice.

Five bands of Shadows are in the King's Forest, each with approximately twenty-five members. They remain in constant motion, using Survival to forage for food and shelter. The Shadows of the Forest claim to hear the whispers of the wild, a call that guides them in their travels. Occasionally this pulls a Shadow away from his band; it may even draw him out of the King's Forest and onto the path of the adventurer.

Most of the Shadows are humans and shifters, though one of the five bands is comprised entirely of gnomes. The Shadows have a close affinity with displacer beasts, represented by the Beast Totem, Beast Shape, and Beast Companion feats. They are masters of stealth, and many Shadow druids take the Guerilla Warrior feat (from [Heroes of Battle](#)) or a level or two in the ranger class to enhance their skill with Hide and Move Silently. The techniques of the sect are similar to those of the Wardens of the Wood, and at the DM's discretion a Shadow character may take the Warden Initiate feat.

About the Author

Keith Baker has been an avid fan of **Dungeons & Dragons** since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of Eberron to the Wizards of the Coast Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the **Eberron** Campaign Setting and *Shadows of the Last War*, he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

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